

REMARKS

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ON

DRUNKENNESS,

WITH CASES:

AND

ADVICE TO THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE IN THE HABIT
OF DRINKING SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS.

BY A MEDICAL MAN.

“ The art of extracting alcoholic liquors, by distillation from various liquors, must be regarded as the greatest curse ever inflicted upon human nature.”

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ON DRUNKENNESS.

OF all the various evil habits in which mankind indulge, there is perhaps none so fatal in its effects, nor so injurious to the interests and happiness of society, as the excessive drinking of spirituous liquors. This evil is much greater than it is generally believed to be, and many persons indulge in this destructive habit, who would be indignant at the name of drunkards being applied to them. In the following pages it is my intention to lay before my readers a plain account of the changes that excessive drinking produces on the body as well as on the mind;—to point out the unhappy alteration that it causes in the general habits and affections of those who indulge in it;—and also to suggest the only way of avoiding the consequences of

this vice—a premature death or a total loss of character. The opinions that I shall give are not merely mine; they are those of the most experienced in the medical profession, and who have heard the observations of the poor deluded patients during life, and have examined their bodies after death. The cases that I shall give are chiefly those of persons whom I have attended as medical adviser, and with whose opinions and feelings I have been well acquainted.

It does not appear to me to be necessary to describe the chemical nature of spirituous liquors. It is generally known that the active ingredient in these is spirit of wine, or, as it is called, *alcohol*: the most destructive enemy to the happiness and comfort of man that was ever discovered, and the most fruitful source of crime and misery.

It has been well remarked that “man is a bundle of habits.” The effects of habit are truly wonderful; so much so, that we at length take pleasure even in those things which at first were absolutely painful to us. One of the most common illustrations of this fact, is the habit of smoking tobacco. Those who are beginners are generally sick and giddy before they can become smokers, but a little time produces a great change; and that which caused sickness and headache, soon becomes a pleasing recre-

ation, but too often allied with the habit of hard drinking.

It can scarcely be necessary for me to point out to my readers the wickedness and the folly of this habit. In all works of morality this vice is highly censured; and every one knows, or ought to know, that in the Bible it is particularly condemned. It is not the ~~in~~jury that drunkenness produces to the guilty individual alone that is to be dreaded, but his family and immediate connexions often suffer as much in some respects as himself, and too frequently share the same common ruin. From what we know of the nature of habit, how soon it grows upon us, and when once fixed how very difficult it is to be removed, we ought to be very careful not to indulge in any habits that are injurious either to our health or to our pecuniary circumstances. How many are there who, having lived in affluence and accustomed themselves to their bottle, are suddenly thrown upon the world, too often destitute not only of the luxuries, but even of the necessaries of life? There is no part of education of more importance than the teaching young people not to create wants by indulging in luxuries of which, even when moderately enjoyed, they may feel the deprivation, and which, when taken in excess, are only productive of misery or disease. It is well

remarked by a great man, Hugo Grotius, that those things which are sufficient to support nature are few, and procured without great labour or expense.

Drinking to excess not only ruins a man's health, but in most cases it is injurious or destructive to his fortune. In the case of working men and artisans it is doubly pernicious. There is not only the money spent in the purchase of the liquor, but the waste of time incurred; so that, in reality, every drop costs the poor man double the sum it does a man of independent property: however, both of them pay dear enough for their folly.

Many persons are induced to contract a habit of drinking spirits, wine, or fermented liquors, from an idea that they tend to strengthen them, and are beneficial to their health. Nothing can be more unfounded than this idea. There is not one person in a hundred who can receive benefit from the use of such stimulants. Such persons would find that they would be equally strong, and enjoy better health and better spirits, if they would confine themselves to good table-beer or even to water. The history of Dr. Benjamin Franklin is a good illustration of what I advance. He was a printer, and a journeyman-printer, for some years of his life, and during this period he always drank water: The

other men used to laugh at him, and call him the *Aquatic*; but this Franklin cared nothing about, and undertook to carry a greater weight up the stairs of the printing-office than any of the men who indulged in dram-drinking, which feat he performed with ease. I do not pretend to say that spirits are not in some cases useful; but then cases of this kind are very rare, and the bad effects of the use of spirits on society, is infinitely greater than any good they do. When once a man becomes addicted to the use of them, he places himself in a most perilous situation; for if he continue in his evil course, he is certain to ruin his health in time, and he feels himself incapable of abstaining from their use, because the habit has become so rooted. Let me give my readers the opinion of a very eminent physician on the subject of taking spirits. “All will agree (says Dr. Wilson Philip) that alcohol in every shape is unnecessary to those who are in health, and have never been accustomed to the use of it; and that had no beverage but water ever been known, however we might feel the want of a stimulus, (in many cases the most valuable we possess,) some of the most fatal diseases we are subject to would have been less frequent.”

The habit of drinking being once formed, cannot be left off without the greatest resolu-

tion, and often a temporary derangement of the health is the consequence; but drunkards make too much of this argument. Many have told me that they should certainly die if they did not take their customary quantity of spirits: but in this they are deceived, and willingly deceived. They feel a sinking and a faintness when they leave off their drinking, and an anxiety for it again, which overpowers any argument against its habitual use.* Their plea is, "Well, I will only have it this once, and then I will give it up entirely." A few glasses restore the miserable person to apparent health and spirits: all is now right again—the mind is cheerful, and every thing wears a smiling aspect. Glass follows glass, till cheerfulness becomes boisterous mirth and noise and folly, and at last the faculties of the mind are clouded, and a state of insensibility ends the dreadful scene. From this state the miserable patient awakes with feelings that no language can describe. The past is now as dark as the future. Resolutions broken, friends deceived, and fortune injured, are the fatal results. The whole powers of mind and body are completely prostrated. The mind be-

* Those who have unhappily brought themselves to this situation, and are sincerely desirous entirely to refrain from spirits for the future, would find considerable relief from taking a biscuit and a wine-glass full of tincture of bark, properly diluted, twice a day.

comes harassed and depressed, and these feelings are often accompanied with the bodily misery of sickness, dreadful headache, and complete loss of appetite. Such are some of the lamentable effects of drunkenness, and too often have I witnessed such scenes!

In the west of England I was well acquainted with a gentleman, and I am sorry to say that he was a medical man, who very gradually, and almost by imperceptible degrees, got into the habit of drinking brandy and water. For a few years he kept this propensity in decent bounds, though it was said, amongst his immediate friends, that he was rather too free with his glass. He now and then appeared to his patients to be heavy and confused, and he would sometimes confess to them that he had unfortunately taken rather more than had agreed with him, which is a very common excuse amongst drunkards. He gradually became a more inveterate drinker, and was occasionally seen to be intoxicated early in the day. It was soon generally known amongst his patients that he was often intoxicated, but as he was a man of great talents, and had obtained the confidence of the public, it had not that effect on his practice that might be supposed, for many had more faith in his physic than in his resolutions of amendment. As I was a particular friend of this gentleman, I often

talked with him on the subject of his case, as I called it. He said that no one could be more aware of the folly of his own conduct than himself—that he was determined to make greater exertions than he hitherto had done to conquer the propensity—that his situation he was aware was a most critical one—and that his character and property were at stake. He did make resolutions, and frequently kept them for several weeks; but his relapses at length were so frequent, that I found it quite useless to talk to him on the subject of his infirmity. This gentleman was well read in his profession, and possessed excellent medical tact and discrimination. I have often met him in consultation in a morning, with his mind unclouded and his judgment clear, and the same evening I have seen him little better than an idiot! I have known him to continue in a state of intoxication for days together, and I have observed him standing at his door, as I passed his house early in a morning, the complete personification of degradation and wretchedness, with an unmeaning eye and a fallen countenance, talking ribaldry and nonsense to the working people as they passed to their labour. Such a state could not long continue without ruining his health; but it was his mind that destroyed him more than his bodily sufferings. The consciousness of his folly and

the sense of his degradation conspired to render him another victim to the shocking habit of intemperance. I have heard him lament in terms of great bitterness the dreadful situation to which he had reduced himself. He would often end by saying, "Well, thank God, it is never too late to reform, and I believe I can now say that I have reformed." I heard this too often to put any faith in it. Had this gentleman but checked his propensity at first, he might now have been living a happy and a most useful member of society. From this case it is plain that we cannot be too watchful over ourselves, to avoid the taking of wine or spirits unnecessarily, lest it become a habit, and this it soon does, if a person allows himself to indulge in the daily use of them. "One glass more can do no harm!" and so they go on from hour to hour, and from year to year, till too often the constitution gives way under some one or other of those numerous diseases of which fermented liquors are the fruitful source.

The diseases that are produced by excessive drinking are numerous, and many of them fatal. Indigestion is very common from this source, and so are pains of the stomach and in the bowels; and also the discharge of blood into the bowels, or internal hæmorrhage, as it is called. Strong liquors are likewise the fruitful source

of palsy, apoplexy, jaundice, dropsy, gravel, diseased liver, and insanity. It is not only the direct injury that spirits produce on the body; but those people who are drinkers have not the same chance of recovering from fevers, or from inflammations of the bowels and lungs, as persons of more sober habits have. I shall here give an extract from the works of Dr. Willan, a man of great learning and observation. He was physician to a large dispensary in London, and had excellent opportunities of forming accurate opinions, as his practice, both public and private, was very extensive. He says: "On comparing my own observations with the bills of mortality, I am convinced that considerably more than one-eighth of all the deaths which take place in persons above twenty years old, happen prematurely through excess in drinking spirits. These pernicious liquors have an immediate and specific effect on the liver; which viscus has been found after death, in drinkers of spirits, hardened or altered as to its texture, discoloured and diminished. It appears, however, that the stomach and bowels suffer first from the use of spirits; and that their baneful influence is afterwards extended gradually to every part of the body, producing a variety of morbid phænomena."

This is an awful statement: one person out

of every eight who die, perishing from the effects of hard drinking! and many of them quite young, probably with families or relatives dependent upon them for their support! Let any one look at the bills of mortality and remember this, and he will at once see the dreadful havoc excessive drinking makes in thinning the ranks of mankind.

It will now be seen how numerous the diseases are, produced by excessive indulgence in spirituous liquors. We have seen that a most able medical man reckons that one person out of every eight, who dies above the age of twenty, dies from excessive drinking. If this be the case, how many are there—how many thousands are there—suffering from this dreadful propensity! The mass of misery from this cause is great indeed. Sufferings, varying from slight derangement of the stomach to the total breaking up of the constitution—from a slight irritability of mind to the raving madness or the drivelling idiotcy, all produced by excessive indulgence.

One of the first symptoms that affects the drunkard, is a dislike to plain food, accompanied by a want of appetite for breakfast. When he can procure it, he is very fond of putting a little brandy or rum in his tea. He is often affected with sickness, or rather a tendency to sickness, and a feeling of faintness, and he becomes

alarmed without any reason. These symptoms continue for some time, and are succeeded by others more severe, such as the water-brash, which is a discharge from the stomach into the mouth of a clear fluid, sometimes of an acid taste, sometimes sweetish; shooting pains are often felt in different parts of the body, particularly in the bowels, attended with great langour, shortness of breathing, and great depression of mind; sometimes a slow inflammation takes place in the bowels, and the patient is at last worn out by a slow fever. Occasionally the bowels become so tender that the least pressure causes intense pain: the belly swells, the limbs become feeble, and the skin dry and scaly, and the hair falls off; sometimes ulcers break out on the legs, and the throat becomes sore, and the voice hoarse and husky, while the smell of the breath is very offensive: a discharge of blood also often takes place from the stomach or nose, or from the bowels.

I recollect attending a young man under twenty years of age, the son of a publican, who began to drink spirits when he was about sixteen years old. He drank to such excess at last, that he had several fits of the *delirium tremens*, or drunkard's madness. His liver became diseased and enlarged; frequent bleedings took place from his nose and mouth, to such an extent as to threaten his destruction. Dropsy at

length ensued, with great difficulty of breathing. Ultimately a violent hæmorrhage took place, from which he never rallied, but died as miserable an object as can be conceived.

The younger a person is, the less able is he to bear the stimulus of spirituous liquors. They show their fatal effects in these cases in a very short time; and I have known very few cases when the person began to drink under twenty years of age, that he survived more than two or three years. It is not only the body suffers; the mind soon becomes affected. And here I shall again insert an extract from Dr. Willan's excellent remarks.

“An entire change in the state of the mind takes place. At first low spirits, strange sensations, and groundless fears, alternate with unseasonable and boisterous mirth: a degree of stupidity or confusion of ideas succeeds. The memory, and the faculties depending on it, being impaired, there takes place an indifference towards usual occupations and accustomed society or amusements. No interest is taken in the concern of others: no love, no sympathy remain. Even natural affection to nearest relatives is gradually extinguished, and the moral sense seems obliterated. The wretched victims of a fatal poison fall, at length, into a state of fatuity, and die with the powers both of body

and mind wholly exhausted. Some, after repeated fits of derangement, expire in a sudden and violent phrenzy. Some are hurried out of the world by apoplexies; others perish by the slower process of jaundice, dropsy, ulcerations of the alimentary canal, and gangrenous ulcers of the extremities." That is, by mortification taking place. This is all true: and I have seen many cases illustrative of the above dreadful and appalling account; cases that, unless we had seen them, would almost appear incredible.

To show how far the feelings of natural affection are blunted by gin-drinking:—I was called early one morning to attend a man who, I was told, was labouring under excessive difficulty of breathing, and who required my immediate attendance. I hastened to him, and found him leaning over a chair, and labouring for breath. It struck me that if he lost a little blood it might relieve him; but I soon found out my mistake, for it made him worse. I then insisted that I must have a true history of his case; when I was informed that he had been drinking harder than usual of late; that he was in the daily habit of taking a great quantity of gin or brandy; and that, feeling unwell, he had suddenly left it off, and that he was seized with difficulty of breathing and great debility. I saw

at once the imminent danger there was from this sudden collapse of the whole system. I gave him some brandy and water, and sent off for another medical man, a physician of great experience and extensive practice. I acknowledged the mistake I had made in bleeding my patient. He agreed that nothing but the most powerful stimuli could save him, and that appeared barely possible. However, I determined to watch by him and administer the medicine myself. We first gave him about two wine-glasses full of hot Madeira wine, with a glass full of brandy in it. We then applied hot fomentations to his feet, now become cold. In about an hour I administered a bolus of musk and carbonate of ammonia, washing it down with a draught of tincture of cardamoms and spirits of ammonia. In about half an hour another draught of hot Madeira and brandy, and then we had the body rubbed over with oil and hartshorn with hot flannels. The miserable patient said he must die, but I did all I could to keep up his spirits. However, he insisted upon taking his last farewell of his brother, who he said was leading the same course of life as himself. The servant went up to the brother's room to tell him, but no brother came. I said, perhaps he did not understand her, and that I would go to him. His sister accompanied me. I told him, that

my patient I feared was dying, and that he wished to take his last farewell of him. The fellow, with all the *sang froid* imaginable, rubbed his eyes, and said, "Indeed!"

"Yes," said I; "you must come immediately, if you wish to see him alive."

"Well, I will then," said he. We left him, but he did not make his appearance according to his promise. In about half an hour, actuated by curiosity, the sister and I returned to his rooms, and there he lay fast asleep! "Let him sleep," said I: "he is not worth waking." There had been no quarrel between the brothers. It was all the effects of drunkenness, and the total want of affection, which this habit so often produces.

To return to our patient. We continued to give him the hot wine and brandy every hour through the night, and in the morning he was certainly rallying; and to make short of his case, he ultimately recovered, and enjoyed the usual state of health of a drunkard. His brother, who himself was incorrigible, was found one morning in a ditch, where he had lain all night in cold weather. He was carried home almost insensible, and I was sent for. I found him with a weak pulse and great prostration of strength. We did all in our power, by giving him stimulants, and the application of warmth to

restore him; but he gradually grew worse and worse, and died about twelve hours after he was found; thus adding one more to the numerous victims to the fatal effects of strong liquors.

These cases pretty clearly exemplify the effects of dram-drinking, and show to what an extent both the bodily powers and the natural affections suffer from it. These two brothers were connected with many more in the same village, who were destroying themselves by this practice. It was remarked by Dr. Paley, who was a shrewd observer of mankind, that when the habit of hard drinking is introduced into any village, it often becomes prevalent, and that one hard drinker is frequently the ruin of many other people. This is quite true, and I have known many families who have lost two or three of their children in this way; the younger branches, when they were old enough, accompanying their elders to the alehouse, and thus very gradually getting into the same fatal habits. The brother-in-law of the young men whose cases are given above, got involved in the same miserable habits; and I never met with a man who suffered more from his irregular course of life. At first he had some affection of his liver, accompanied with headache, which often came on in dreadful paroxysms; for this he was bled and cupped, had his head shaved, and a seton put into the nape

of his neck, which gave him some relief. He also suffered much from mental disease, labouring under the most dreadful apprehensions, and feeling, as he said, in great fear and alarm. The disease on his head at last assumed a chronic form, and for this he underwent a course of mercury and repeated bleedings with leeches. At times he became delirious and appeared to be a mass of complicated disease and misery. However, as he was a young man under thirty, and possessed an excellent constitution, he rallied wonderfully, and assured his medical attendant and friends, that if ever it pleased Providence to restore him from his dreadful sufferings and misery, he would reform his life, and for ever give up the bad habit of excessive drinking. After a long course of suffering he ultimately recovered a pretty good state of health, and certainly has most religiously kept his promise, indulging in nothing stronger than a few glasses of ale. Thus was restored to his wife and young family, one who was on the point of adding another victim to the long list of those who have sacrificed their lives to their bad passions.

It may be thought that I have given an exaggerated account of the bad effects of this vice; but I can most solemnly assure my readers, that no language is too strong for the subject,

or can paint in too strong colours the wretchedness that a drunkard undergoes, before he is released by death from his load of misery. I have often heard from their own mouths an account of their sufferings; I have attended them in their last moments, and through illnesses produced by their follies, so that I have had ample opportunity for observation. There are still other diseases which this vice produces, many of which are attended with most distressing and dangerous symptoms. One of the most alarming of these is insanity, or madness, as it is generally called, and this shocking disease is very commonly produced by hard drinking. Although drunkenness is a species of madness whilst it lasts, yet the kind I mean is of long duration, and often renders it necessary to confine the patient in some lunatic asylum. In some of these cases the patients soon recover, if they can be kept from spirituous liquors; but as it generally happens, they are no sooner set at liberty, than they immediately begin their old career, and again relapse into a state of madness; thus making it necessary, as well for their own safety as that of their friends, to keep them under constant restraint.

That species of madness (already alluded to) peculiar to drunkards, called the *delirium tremens*, which means the trembling delirium, from

the great trembling of the hands of those persons who are affected by it, is a most distressing disease, and full of danger. I have seen many instances of it, and I am sure that to witness one case of this disease, is quite sufficient to put a man on his guard, as to dram-drinking. It is a disease which, till within these few years, was very fatal, as its method of cure was not well understood; because, although bleeding appears to be necessary, yet, if the patient be bled, he seldom recovers. This complaint generally attacks a person after a greater debauch than usual, and generally after the drunkenness is gone off. Though the hands of drunkards are frequently very unsteady, yet in this disease the trembling is so remarkable, as to attract the attention of a careless observer. There is first a degree of restlessness, and an anxious expression of countenance. In the course of a little time the patient becomes suspicious, and gets unfounded ideas into his mind. He then grows alarmed, and looks suspiciously about him. The skin is relaxed, and is often covered with a profuse perspiration. He talks incoherently, and fancies he has a great deal of business to transact, and that he must not delay a moment. He becomes quite restless, and will not either lie or sit down a moment; but wanders from room to room, and if not prevented, would

immediately leave the house and wander on his supposed business. The patient does not obtain a moment's sleep; but through the whole night is just as restless as in the day. The pulse becomes quick, the extremities and the face and forehead feel cool, whilst the perspirations continue; the appetite entirely fails; the strength of the patient becomes less and less; but there is no tendency to sleep. Day after day, and night after night the restlessness continue. This is the most striking symptom of the disease, and if sleep is not procured, the patient must sink under the disorder. Now this is not a very rare malady; and in large commercial towns, where dissolute habits prevail, it is by no means uncommon: hundreds have died of it, from its having been mistaken for phrenzy, or inflammation of the brain, or for madness, and from the proper remedies having consequently been neglected. The great object is to procure sleep, for without this, the patient will die; and our reliance must be placed in the proper administration of opium till sleep be procured. This, of course, must be under the sanction of a medical man. I have known patients fancy they saw devils running round the room, and that they are talking to their friends who have long been dead. In fact, they labour under all kinds of delusions.

That this is not an exaggerated account of the disease, the following case will show. A woman called on me early one morning, and begged me to visit her husband as soon as I could. She informed me that he was in a very strange way, for that he had not had a moment's rest the whole night, and very little the night before; and that she was afraid he was out of his mind. I went immediately to see him, and found him labouring under all the symptoms of the drunkard's delirium. He was a porter at a wine vault, and was also employed in bottling wine and spirits; and I discovered, from some of his companions, that of late he had indulged in taking more drink than was prudent. He had never been in the habit of drinking spirits till he was employed here. The fancy he had got into his head was, that the house that employed him had received some very extensive orders, and that he was busily engaged in packing up wine; and certainly no man ever entered more sincerely into the interests of his employers, for he worked (at least in imagination) for three days and nights unceasingly. He packed up and sent off dozens and dozens of fine old port, fancying he carried straw to pack the wine, and walking from one part of the room to the other as if carrying the wine, or giving his orders where it was to be sent; and sometimes wanting to go out of the

house with his supposed burden. He never rested a moment, the sweat often pouring off him, and he was with difficulty persuaded to take a little nourishment. When the time came for giving him his medicine, he said he was plagued to death with their pills, and desired not to be interrupted. I now and then persuaded him to lie on the bed and try if he could sleep. "Sleep, indeed," said he, "with all these orders to execute, and to send out all this wine!" and up he would jump after lying a few minutes. I gave him opium every hour, both in a liquid and solid form, increasing the dose every time, as I found his strength rapidly declining; and as he had taken, in repeated doses, fifty grains of solid opium, besides several drachms of laudanum, I administered ten grains of solid opium at one dose. In a few hours after this he got about an hour's sleep, and by giving him smaller doses a little more sleep was procured, and he was thus providentially snatched from the jaws of death. My patient was extremely weak for some time after he recovered his senses; and being very sensible of the imminent danger he had been in, he conducted himself afterwards with great propriety. I advised his employers to remove him to some other department of their establishment, where he would not have it in his power to indulge his inclination for drink. He has not,

since this time, had any further attacks of this formidable disease. From the account which I have given, it might be supposed that the list of the miseries caused by excessive drinking of spirituous liquors was exhausted; but this is not the case: so deleterious is the effects that this dreadful habit produces over the body and on the powers of the mind, that volumes might be filled with the miseries which it causes.

Amongst the diseases peculiar to drunkards, there is one in particular of a most singular and appalling nature; this is termed the spontaneous combustion of the human body, in which the body actually takes fire whilst the patient is alive, and continues to burn till the greater part of it is consumed. This fact has often been doubted; however, the evidence is so strong in support of it, that we cannot resist it without discarding the assertions of persons of unimpeachable integrity. It is not one or two cases of it that we have on record; but there are, in several of the scientific publications of Europe, many well-attested cases. There are various facts in natural history and in natural philosophy for which we are unable to account, and yet we cannot doubt of their truth; and in this fact, of the combustion of the human body, we have all the evidence that the case admits of.

Dr. Mitchell (in the “ American Medical Re-

corder") believes, that combustible gases are generated in the bodies of drunkards by the decomposition of the alcohol, or spirits of wine, when taken in large quantities.

The first case I shall give, is by Mr. Wilmer, who was a very celebrated surgeon at Coventry. " Mary Clues, aged fifty, was much addicted to intoxication. Her propensity to this vice had increased after the death of her husband, which happened a year and a half before. For about a year, scarcely a day had passed in the course of which she did not drink, at least, half a pint of rum. Her health gradually declined, and about the beginning of February she was attacked by the jaundice and confined to her bed. Though she was incapable of much action, and not in a condition to work, she still continued her old habit of drinking every day, and smoking a pipe of tobacco. On Saturday morning, the 1st of March, she fell on the floor, and her extreme weakness having prevented her from getting up, she remained in that state till some one entered and put her to bed. The following night she wished to be left alone : a woman quitted her at half-past eleven, and, according to custom, shut the door and locked it. She had put on the fire two large pieces of coal, and placed a light in a candlestick, on a chair at the head of the bed. At half-past five in the morning a smoke was seen

issuing through the windows, and the door being speedily broken open, some flames which were in the room were soon extinguished. Between the bed and the chimney were found the remains of the unfortunate woman; one leg and a thigh were still entire; but there remained nothing of the skin or the muscles, the viscera or bowels, heart, lungs, &c. The bones of the head, the breast, the spine, and the arms were entirely calcined, and covered with a whitish efflorescence. The people were much surprised that the furniture had received so little injury. The side of the bed which was next to the chimney had suffered the most: the wood of it was slightly burnt; but the feather-bed, the clothes, and covering were safe. I entered the apartment about two hours after it had been opened, and observed that the walls and every thing in it were blackened; that it was filled with a very disagreeable vapour; but that nothing except the body exhibited any strong traces of fire."

It appears from this case, that the body must have burnt of itself, and that it was not reduced to ashes by being in a strong fire: "for," says Mr. Wilmer, "nothing except the body exhibited any strong traces of fire, and we know that it would take an immense fire to reduce a human body to ashes."

There is another case mentioned by a celebrated French physician : “ A woman about fifty years of age, who indulged to excess in spirituous liquors, and got drunk every night before she went to bed, was found entirely burnt and reduced to ashes. Some of the bony parts only were left; but the furniture of the apartment had suffered very little damage.”

The last case I shall insert, is one in which a person narrowly escaped execution for the supposed murder of his wife. “ The wife of the *Sieur Millet* at *Rheims*, got intoxicated every day, and the domestic economy of the house was managed by a young female. This woman was found consumed on the 20th of February, 1725, at the distance of a foot and a half from the hearth in the kitchen. A part of the head only, with a portion of the lower extremities, and a few of the vertebræ, had escaped combustion. A foot and a half of the floor under the body had been consumed; but a kneading-trough and a tub, which were very near the body, sustained no injury. *M. Chretien*, a surgeon, examined the remains of the body with every juridical formality. *Jean Millet*, the husband, being interrogated by the judges, declared, that about eight in the evening of the 19th of February, he had retired to rest with his wife, who not being able to sleep, had gone into the kitchen, where he

thought she was warming herself: that he having fallen asleep, was awakened about two o'clock by an infectious odour, and that having run to the kitchen he found the remains of his wife in the state described in the report of the physicians and surgeons. The judges formed an opinion that he had conspired with his servant to destroy his wife, and he was condemned to death. On appeal, however, to a higher court, this decree was reversed, and it was pronounced a case of human combustion. But the man's health and fortune were irreparably destroyed, and he died in a hospital."

My chief object in inserting these cases is, to show the great changes that may be produced in the human body by excessive dram-drinking.

Dr. Mason Good says: "In this wonderful malady the art of medicine can be rarely of any avail, since the mischief is, in almost all instances, only to be discovered after the cessation of life, and the destruction of some part of the body by an actual flame or fire, in many instances spontaneously issuing from its surface. There may be some difficulty in giving credit to so marvellous a diathesis; yet examples of its existence, and of its leading to a fatal combustion, are so numerous and so well authenticated, and press upon us from so many different countries and eras, that it would be absurd to withhold

our assent. In some cases, the heat that has set them on fire appears to have originated in themselves; in others, to have been communicated by a stove, or a candle, or a stroke of lightning; but in no case has the fire, or flame, hereby excited in the body, been so powerful as essentially to injure the most combustible substances immediately adjoining it, as linen or woollen furniture. The body, in several instances, has been found actually burning, sometimes with an open flame flickering over it, and sometimes with a smothered heat or fire, without any open flame whatever; while the application of water has occasionally seemed rather to quicken than check the igneous process. The event has usually taken place at night, when the sufferer has been alone, and has commonly been discovered by the fetid, penetrating scent of sooty films, which have spread to a considerable distance." There are many cases of this affection detailed in the 43rd and 44th vol. of the *Philosophical Transactions*.

The quantity of drink that people addicted to strong liquors take is very different, and its effects, as to causing intoxication, also varies very much in different individuals. To give an instance of this I shall relate the following case. A person accosted me one day in the country, and said he wished I would give him something

to take, for that he did not feel well. He complained of headache. I saw he was intoxicated, and knew that he was in the habit of being in that state. I told him that I feared he took too much gin; and I said, "Now, be honest for once, and tell me how much you have really had to-day?" "Well, then," said he, "I will; and I have had thirteen glasses of gin-and-water before breakfast." I afterwards enquired into this, and found it was the case. His wife told me that he never took less than a bottle of gin daily. I explained to him, that if he went on in this way he would soon be dead. However, this advice availed nothing; he went on from bad to worse, and had a violent attack of the drunkard's delirium, and when he was in this state I was sent for. He swore he would murder the first man that came into the house; and there he stood, with the poker in his hand, an immense fellow, six feet high, and amazingly lusty. We watched our opportunity, and when he had put down the poker, and stood with his face to the fire, I slipped behind him, and suddenly pulled him back on the floor, when two or three of his friends put a straight-jacket on him to prevent his doing any mischief. He got better of this attack, but went on in the old courses; at last his health gave way, his liver became diseased, and an immense abscess formed at the side of his

neck and face, and he lay in bed a huge mass of disease, the hours of his life fast ebbing away. Finding that he was near his end, he called his wife to his side, and said: "I shall not be able to speak much longer; and now, mind and *ply me well with gin*, with a tea-spoon, when I am past speaking!"—which office she promised to perform, and carried her promise into effect. He only lived a day or two after this request.

To show what acts of extreme folly are frequently committed by those in the practice of excessive drinking, I will relate the case of a man about thirty years of age, who had succeeded to property belonging to his father, to the amount of a hundred and sixty pounds per annum. A rich uncle had died, to whom he was heir-at-law; but on account of his drunken habits he left all his property (about fifteen thousand pounds) to the drunkard's sister and her children. The wretched man one day said that he would sell all his freehold property, consisting of a house and shop, and eight acres of land, which brought him in sixty pounds per annum. The person to whom he said this, told him that he would give him one hundred pounds, there and then, for the property; this he did, and got some unprincipled attorney to make out the deeds of sale. This was, no doubt, a fraudulent transaction; but the mind of the drunkard had become too much

enervated to understand any thing of the matter, and his friends cared nothing about him! Such things are scarcely credible.

In the neighbourhood where I resided there lived a farmer, who lost his life in consequence of an accident occasioned by this destructive vice of drinking to excess. I one day asked him how much he thought he drank daily. "Well, sir," said he, "I never take less than eight quarts of ale a day, and sometimes more: a few glasses of spirits and water, and three or four glasses of wine, if I can get them, with my old aunt." The next time I saw his wife, I asked her if the account he gave me was true. "Oh yes, sir," she replied, "it is but too true!" One evening I met this man near a mile from his own house; he had been to market, and from his manner of riding, and from what he said to me, I saw he was intoxicated: the next day I heard of his death. He had fallen from his horse into a brook that crossed the road, not above a foot deep, and was drowned. Whether he had been seized with a fit of apoplexy, or fell from his horse stopping to drink, was never known. He left a young widow and several children.

The mass of what are termed nervous diseases chiefly owe their origin to the shocking habit of excessive drinking, and dreadful is the suffering produced by them. "Of all the miseries that

afflict human life, (says Dr. Cheyne,) I think that nervous disorders are the most deplorable, and beyond all comparison the worst." It was the observation of a learned and judicious physician, that he had seen persons labouring under the most exquisite pains of gout, stone, cholic, cancer, and all the other distempers that can tear the human machine; yet had he observed them all willing to prolong their wretched being, and scarce any ready to lay down cheerfully the load of clay, except those persons who laboured under a constant internal anxiety, meaning those dreadful sinking nervous disorders: it is truly one of the greatest miseries to be dreaded and avoided in life. Though other evils be burdens, yet an erected spirit can bear them; but when the supports are fallen, and cover the man with their ruins, the desolation is perfect.

Let me, therefore, earnestly entreat those persons who are seriously bent upon reformation, and who are determined to relinquish their evil habits, to consider how very easily the taking of spirituous liquors becomes a habit; for when once this habit is formed, there is then, speaking figuratively, a spark kindled in the throat, that no quantity of drink will extinguish, and the miserable man goes on from bad to worse, and from poverty to total want, till death ends his miseries. To show that this is not a fancied picture, I may

mention that there is now in England the son of a clergyman of the established church, breaking stones on the highway, who has reduced himself from affluence and respectability to his present condition, by his dreadful habits of intemperance.

To conclude:—there is then no well-grounded hope of the reformation of a drunkard, but in his determination entirely to abstain from his evil propensity. Let not this for a moment be considered as an impossibility, because the example of thousands has happily proved to the contrary. Let his friends use their utmost endeavours to keep the noxious draught from his lips; and when he feels those dreadful sensations of faintness and depression of spirits, occasioned by his wicked course of intemperance, let them not feed the flame by having recourse to even the smallest quantity of the fatal poison: but let them endeavour to restore the tone of the stomach by a crust of bread, or a hard biscuit, with two teaspoonfuls of tincture of bark properly diluted, and taken night and morning; this, with suitable light, nourishing articles of food, taken in small quantities, and at rather short intervals, would tend to strengthen the nervous system, and enable the unhappy victim of intemperance the better to abstain from the fatal poison.

Above all, let him, by “watchfulness unto

prayer," seek for Divine assistance to enable him to keep this good resolution ; then will he find, that the longer the abstinence, the greater the strength both of body and mind ; and thus, it may be hoped, he may ultimately be rescued from the dreadful consequences of an untimely end!

THE END.

